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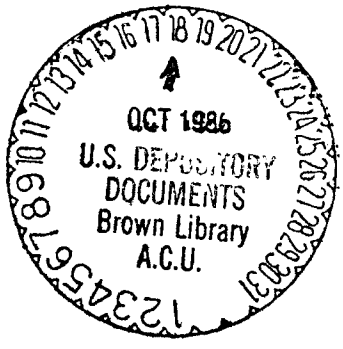

LIQUID HASHISH

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The production of hashish oil, or liquid hashish, is a sophisticated attempt to concentrate the basic active ingredient in marijuana - tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Although it is designated "liquid," hashish in this form is normally a viscous substance, dark green in color, which has the constency of tar, is insoluble in water, and tends to solidify on prolonged contact with air. The substance is in fact an illicitly manufactured form of what was formerly known in the pharmaceutical and medical professions as Tincture or Extract of Cannabis, a product used for medical purposes. However, the appearance of liquid hashish on the illicit drug market is a relatively new development.

Since February 1973, seizures of this substance have considerably increased in number. DEA liquid hashish removals for CY 73 in the United States totaled 2.641 liters and 2,890.63 grams. Foreign removals for the same period were 13.8 liters and 28,320.0 grams. The traffic, international in nature, does not appear to be confined to any particular part of the world, although North America seems to be an important destination. Clearly, traffickers have realized that the smaller bulk and higher potency diminishes the risks involved in transportation and increases the financial return. For these reasons it seems advisable to circulate the available information regarding this relatively new form of traffic to all drug enforcement officials.

DOMESTIC CASES

Following are specific cases from DEA files involving hashish oil in the United States which may be helpful samples in assessing the traffic.

On August 7, 1972, the New York Customs mail facility discovered a mail parcel entering the United States containing approximately one quart of liquid hashish. The mail parcel was enroute to a Salinas, California address and bore a return address of Destvaranasi UP, India. As of February 19, 1974, the suspected sender of the parcel was still being sought in Washington, D.C.

In September, 1973, a hashish oil laboratory in operation was discovered in an Austin, Texas residence.

In October 1973, it was determined that a defendant in Kansas City, Missouri was involved in smuggling gallon quantities of liquid hashish into the United States from India through Canada. In addition, the 15.5 fluid ounces of hashish oil seized were found to be exceptionally high quality, which would break down to over 30,000 dosage units.

On October 11, 1973, DEA Special Agents executed a search warrant and discovered an illicit hashish oil laboratory in an Aptos, California residence. A small quantity of hashish oil and marijuana was seized. This represented the first seizure of a hashish oil laboratory in California and indicated a new trend in traffic.

On December 14, 1973, two Canadian nationals entered the United States from Mexico at Laredo, Texas. Their vehicle was searched and, with the assistance of the Customs dog handler and his dog, a hot water bottle containing 3 pounds of liquid hashish was discovered behind the left side panel of the vehicle. The two Canadians were then arrested.

FOREIGN CASES

Interpol's SEPAT Plan missions revealed that a certain number of European countries were concerned by the development of this new form of traffic and obtained information that emphasizes the increasing seriousness of the situation. The following information, most of which concerns various countries visited under the SEPAT Plan, is available.

Germany

On January 22, 1974, two American citizens and a German national were arrested in Karachi, Pakistan. Authorities seized 11 liters of hashish oil, purchased in Kabul and secreted under the rear seat of a vehicle which was to have been shipped to Los Angeles, California. Documentary evidence seized from the defendants included detailed instructions for the manufacture of hashish oil as well as receipts for laboratory equipment. It was believed likely that the defendants had established or were in the process of establishing a hashish oil laboratory in the Los Angeles area. This case emphasizes the truly international nature of this kind of traffic.

On March 6, 1974, the DEA Munich District Office, in cooperation with local officials, seized 22 pounds of hashish oil on a train between Ingolstadt and Munich, Germany. To date, this is the largest hashish oil seizure in Germany.

During the entire month of March, 1974, DEA representatives, working in conjunction with the German Police officials in three separate cases (one of which was the aforementioned seizure) confiscated 16 kilograms of hashish oil. This figure, when compared to the 25.8 kilograms of liquid hashish seized in

Germany during all ot 1973 and the 0.60 kilograms confiscated during 1972, indicates a disturbing trend toward the exploitation of this new form of cannabis by drug traffickers.

Netherlands

Hashish in liquid form has also recently made its appearance in the Netherlands.

Two cases are particularly worth noting in this respect.

- The arrest of June 10, 1972, of a United States national at Schipol Airport (Amsterdam).
- She had hidden under her clothing contraceptive sheaths containing 3 kilograms of liquid hashish, intended for Canada, and which were apparently purchased in Karachi (Pakistan).
- The arrest on October 13, 1972, at the same airport, of another United States national, who had hidden in her brassiere - and also in contraceptive sheaths - 526 grams of liquid hashish. She had apparently received the drug from a woman in Amsterdam; it was intended for the United States.

In both cases, the analysis made by the forensic science laboratory at the Hague established that this liquid contained a percentage of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which varied from 20% to 32%.

Afghanistan

Information obtained points to Afghanistan (Kabul) as a source of liquid hashish.

According to information from various sources, there are occasionally seizures of liquid hashish in Afghanistan. Apparently, several Europeans and Americans have been arrested and are in prison there.

Two cases in Afghanistan have been reported.

- December 1971 - seizure of 43.7 liters of liquid hashish; one United States national arrested.
- January 1972 - seizure of 95 liters of liquid hashish; four United States nationals - including a woman - arrested.

A "laboratory" was apparently discovered.

These persons are reported to be currently serving prison sentences in Afghanistan.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON LIQUID HASHISH

Potency

Liquid hashish is produced by concentrating the basis active ingredient in marijuana - tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Most ground marijuana now used in the United States contains from about 0.5% to 2.0% THC. Hashish, the dark brown resin collected from the tops of the cannabis plants, contains about 10% THC. The liquid hashish so far discovered has varied between 20% and 65% THC content. DEA laboratories have analyzed hashish oil with a THC content of 63%. There is reason to suspect that methods are now being employed to make an even more powerful concentrate. The purity of the final product (i.e. the percentage content of THC) will depend on the degree of sophistication of the apparatus used, but it is presumed that with high vacuum distillation and further

fractional distillation and use of chemical filters, the end product could approach 95% to 100% purity, as a clear liquid.

Use

Like other forms of the drug, liquid hashish can be used several ways. Because of its extraordinary potency, one drop of the material can make a "high." A drop may be placed on a regular cigarette. It may also be used in cooking, in wine, and even smeared on bread.

When smoked, a small drop of hashish oil is smeared inside the glass bowl of a special pipe with a flattened side. The user exhales deeply, tilts the bowl, and holds the flame from a match under the oil. In one inhalation, he draws slowly through the pipe as the oil begins to bubble, continuing as it chars and burns.

Manufacture

There are many ways to produce hashish oil, but the basic principle used by most clandestine operations is similar to that of percolating coffee.

A basket filled with ground or chopped-up marijuana plant is suspended inside a larger container, at the bottom of which is contained a solvent, such as alcohol, hexane, chloroform or petroleum ether. Copper tubing or similar material is arranged at the top through which cold water circulates. The solvent is heated and the vapors rise to the top where they condense, then fall into the basket of marijuana.

As the solvent seeps through the plant materials, the THC and other soluble chemicals are dissolved, and the solution drops back to the bottom of the container.

Continued heating causes the process to occur over and over again. The solution becomes increasingly stronger until the plant material is exhausted of its THC. Sometimes new material is added and the same solvent reheated, yielding an even more potent solution.

Laboratories

Only simple equipment is required. One laboratory used a 55 gallon drum in which was supported a smaller, perforated drum. Copper tubing, attached to a wooden lid, was connected to a cold water supply.

Another laboratory used more elaborate equipment with cooling coils and reflux column "potted" in plastic.

One seizure revealed a veritable "Rube Goldberg" machine consisting of a boiler, a heat exchanger, a vacuum assembly and other components (with parts list, instructions and assembly methods) for a sophisticated hashish oil apparatus which was scheduled to be shipped to the Middle East.

Hashish laboratories have been seized in the middle and western United States, Mexico, and South America. Hashish oil itself has been found in Central and South America, and in several parts of the United States and Europe.

Most of the hashish oil that has been confiscated originated in India or Afghanistan and was shipped via commerical freight directly to the United States or Canada for forwarding. Thus far the senders and the laboratory operators have usually been United States citizens.

IMPLICATIONS OF LIQUID HASHISH TRAFFIC

The high THC content of hashish oil presents serious problems to all concerned - the scientist, the law enforcement officer, and the user.

The scientist faces the urgent task of evaluating the effects of hashish oil with a THC potency that may be as high at 90%.

For the law enforcement officer, the shipment of hashish oil complicates further an already complex problem. Instead of searching for fairly large, bulky packages of hashish or marijuana, the officer must search for smaller, more easily hidden liquid containers.

The material can be dissolved in liquor, aftershave lotion, perfume, or commercial solvents. It may be packaged in heat-sealed plastic bags or specially constructed compartments and placed on the bottoms of pickle barrels, of fuel tanks of planes, boats, or cars. Small vials of the oil can be concealed in fountain pens or jewelry. On one case in Australia, small quantities were found in the form of gelatine capsules. In Kabul a current method of smuggling hashish oil reportedly consists of impregnating two pieces of fabric which are placed back to back, giving the appearance of a single piece of cloth, and then heavily embroidered (which serves to conceal any staining caused by the oil). By far the most widely used means of transporting liquid hashish is the rubber male contraceptive sheath, which can be concealed in a variety of ways.

However, the high THC content of the small-bulk hashish oil presents the gravest problem to the user. The effects of this concentrated hallucinogenic are unknown at the present time. In addition, the user would probably not

be aware of the THC content of the particular substance in his possession - i.e. whether the oil has a THC content of 20% or 65%. Should the user's sample fall in the lower range with regard to purity, he is still in danger from an extremely potent substance. As an indication, we can cite the case involving the seizure of 777 grams of liquid hashish at Highgate Springs, Vermont, United States of America, in August, 1972. The THC content was 22% and, despite its small bulk weight, its potency was estimated as being equal to that of 5,500 kilograms of marijuana.

In connection with potency, it is perhaps appropriate to mention a particular case and seizure in the United States. At the end of July, 1973, the subject, who had a previous conviction for drug trafficking in Morocco, was admitted to a Baltimore hospital after he had taken an overdose of liquid hashish. He had attempted to smuggle the liquid (which he claimed to have purchased in Morocco) into the United States by swallowing 20 male contraceptive sheaths containing the drug. One of the sheaths had ruptured, allowing the hashish to enter directly into the body. The subject was hospitalized in serious condition, but eventually recovered. Nineteen sheaths containing 300 grams of hashish were recovered.

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